

Research effort to focus on kids' health, security



Written by

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In Mississippi and across the country, more children than ever are struggling to hear, see, learn and even draw a breath.

"And we don't know why," said Sharon Wyatt, a professor of medicine and nursing at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

More than 1,000 Hinds County residents will be asked to help solve this mystery by becoming part of a new study whose launch was announced by Wyatt and others Monday at the state Capitol in Jackson.

Hinds County is one of more than 100 locations selected for the National Children's Study. A total of 100,000 children nationwide from pre-birth until age 21 will be followed.

The goal is to improve the health and security of children by developing treatments and guidelines to battle common chronic conditions.

A rise in the occurrence of many of these conditions prompted this research effort sponsored by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Human Development of the National Institutes of Health.

"Mississippi may benefit most from this study," said Dr. Owen "Bev" Evans, who retired in January as chairman of pediatrics at UMC.

"This is critical to Mississippi, which has one of the highest numbers of markers for ill health in the country.

"We're also talking about the health of all Mississippians. ... What happens to a child in the mother's womb can determine what happens later to that child as an adult."

A year ago, another study released by a team of researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston showed that obesity, asthma, hearing or vision difficulties, allergies, behavior or learning struggles and other chronic childhood

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